

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

APPARATUS FOR DRIVING BRUSHLESS MOTOR AND METHOD OF CONTROLLING THE MOTOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of Korean Application No. 2003-42328, filed June 27, 2003, in the Korean Intellectual Property Office, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to an apparatus for driving a brushless motor and method of controlling the motor and, more particularly, to an apparatus for driving a brushless motor and method of controlling the motor, which detects a position of a rotor based on a counter-electromotive voltage.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0003] In general, an output torque of a brushless motor is generated by an interaction between magnetic flux generated from magnetic poles of a rotor and a current flowing in a stator coil. Accordingly, to maximize the output torque, a current should be applied to the stator coil at a phase located near a position where the magnetic flux generated from the magnetic poles of the rotor is maximized.

[0004] However, since positions of the magnetic poles of the rotor change as the motor is rotated, a stator coil corresponding to a phase to which a current should be applied frequently changes. Accordingly, to apply the current to the phase of the stator coil corresponding to the positions of the magnetic poles of the rotor, it is necessary to perform phase commutation at an appropriate point of time.

[0005] Accordingly, phase commutation is performed by outputting a phase commutation signal and applying a current to a corresponding phase of the stator coil at a point of time when a predetermined delay time (generally, corresponding to an electrical angle of 30°) has elapsed after a counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil has reached a predetermined zero-crossing point, as shown in FIG. 1.

[0006] In conventional methods, phase commutation is normally performed when a load current has a normal value. However, extinction of a current is not instantaneous due to an inductance component of the stator coil of the motor when the load current is greater than the normal value. In the latter case, a period T_0 of FIG. 1 is lengthened, so that the counter-electromotive voltage is generated later than desired. Accordingly, a time required for the counter-electromotive voltage to reach the zero-crossing point is lengthened and phase commutation is performed later than desired. Therefore, a current is not applied, at an appropriate time, to the stator coil of a phase located near a position where magnetic flux generated from the magnetic poles of the rotor is maximized. Consequently, the output torque of the motor is decreased. In a worst case, the conventional methods are problematic in that the motor enters an out-of-step range where a rotation control of the motor is no longer performed and, therefore, the motor is stopped.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Accordingly, it is an aspect of the present invention to provide an apparatus for driving a brushless motor and method of controlling the motor allowing phase commutation to be performed at an appropriate time even through a load current varies, thereby stably driving the motor. A position of a rotor is based on a counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil instead of using a sensor for detecting a position of a rotor.

[0008] The foregoing and other aspects of the present invention are achieved by an apparatus for driving a brushless motor, the brushless motor being a multi-pole, multi-phase brushless motor equipped with a plurality of stator coils. A driving apparatus includes an inverter switching driving voltages applied to the multi-phase stator coils, a driver driving the inverter, and a counter-electromotive voltage detector detecting a counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil. A controller determines an elapsed time required to detect a counter-electromotive voltage through the counter-electromotive voltage detector after the driving voltage has been turned off determining a phase commutation point of time based on the determined elapsed time, and controlling the driver to perform phase commutation at the determined phase commutation point of time.

[0009] The controller determines a reference point of time based on the counter-electromotive voltage, and determines a point of time, which is earlier than the determined

reference point of time by a preset time corresponding to the determined elapsed time, as the phase commutation point of time.

[0010] According to an aspect of the present invention, the preset time is proportional to the determined elapsed time. The reference point of time is a point of time when a predetermined delay time has elapsed after the counter-electromotive voltage has reached a preset zero-crossing point. The zero-crossing point corresponds to an average voltage, between a highest voltage and a lowest voltage, of points at which the phases intersect.

[0011] The foregoing and other aspects of the present invention are also achieved by a method of controlling a brushless motor, the brushless motor being a multi-pole, multi-phase brushless motor equipped with a plurality of stator coils. The method includes determining an elapsed time from a falling edge of a driving voltage to a rising edge of a counter-electromotive voltage in an unexcited state of the brushless motor, determining a phase commutation point of time depending on the counted time, and performing phase commutation at the determined phase commutation point of time.

[0012] The method further includes determining a reference point of time based on the counter-electromotive voltage, and determining a time, which is earlier than the determined reference point of time by a preset time corresponding to the determined elapsed time, as the phase commutation point of time. The preset time is proportional to the determined elapsed time.

[0013] The foregoing and other aspects of the present invention are further achieved by a method of controlling a brushless motor, the brushless motor performing phase commutation at a reference point of time determined based on a counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil, the method including counting a time from a falling edge of an unexcited driving voltage to a rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage, determining whether the counter-electromotive voltage reaches a preset zero-crossing point, and determining a time earlier than the reference point of time by a reduced amount of a delay time corresponding to the determined elapsed time upon the counter-electromotive voltage reaching the preset zero-crossing point, as a phase commutation point of time. The reduced amount of the delay time is proportional to the determined elapsed time.

[0014] Additional aspects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows and, in part, will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] These and/or other aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the preferred embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings of which:

FIG. 1 is a waveform diagram of a counter-electromotive voltage illustrating phase commutation in a conventional apparatus for driving a brushless motor;

FIG. 2 is a control block diagram of an apparatus for driving a brushless motor, according to an aspect of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a waveform diagram showing counter-electromotive voltages in respective phases;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged view showing a waveform of a counter-electromotive voltage of one phase of FIG. 3, which illustrates a concept of an aspect of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a graph illustrating a relation between a time required to detect a counter-electromotive voltage and a reduced amount of a delay time of phase commutation; and

FIG. 6 is a flowchart illustrating a method of controlling the brushless motor, according to an of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0016] Reference will now be made in detail to the embodiments of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout. The embodiments are described below to explain the present invention by referring to the figures.

[0017] FIG. 2 is a control block diagram of an apparatus for driving a brushless motor, according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 2, the apparatus for driving a brushless motor according to an aspect of the present invention includes a controller 60, a driver 40, an inverter 20 and a counter-electromotive voltage detector 50. The controller 60 outputs control signals with respect to phases U, V, and W controlling a brushless motor 30. The driver 40 receives the control signals output from the controller 60 and outputs driving

signals driving the brushless motor 30. The inverter 20 includes a plurality of switches switching the phases U, V and W in response to the driving signals of the driver 40. The counter-electromotive voltage detector 50 detects a counter-electromotive voltage induced from each of the phases U, V and W. In FIG. 2, a reference numeral 10 designates a rectifier.

[0018] The brushless motor 30 includes a stator where stator coils of phases U, V and W are connected at first ends thereof to each other like a general 3-phase motor. The motor also includes a rotor having magnetic poles using permanent magnets. The brushless motor 30 is connected to a load.

[0019] According to an aspect of the present invention, differences between the phases U, V and W are substantially 120° .

[0020] As shown in FIG. 3, the controller 60 commutes the phases U, V and W by driving the switching elements of the inverter 20 through the driver 40. The controller 60 repeatedly rotates the rotor of the brushless motor 30 for a period corresponding to an electrical angle ranging from 0° to 120° , detecting each of counter-electromotive voltages for a period T_s corresponding to an electrical angle ranging from 120° to 180° , rotating the rotor of the brushless motor 30 for a period corresponding to an electrical angle ranging from 180° to 300° , and detecting the counter-electromotive voltages for a period corresponding to an electrical angle ranging from 300° to 360° . In this case, the controller 60 actively changes a phase commutation point of time depending on a time, which is required to detect a counter-electromotive voltage, based on signals detected by the counter-electromotive voltage detector 50. This active changing is performed instead of performing phase commutation at a point of time when a predetermined time has elapsed after the counter-electromotive voltage has reached a zero-crossing point, that is, a point corresponding to an average voltage between a highest voltage V_1 and a lowest voltage V_2 of points at which the phases U, V and W intersect each other. Accordingly, phase commutation is performed at a desired time even though the load current or the number of rotations of the brushless motor 30 varies. Thus, the brushless motor 30 is stably operated.

[0021] Hereinafter, an operation of the controller 60 is described with reference to FIGS. 3 to 5.

[0022] Detected counter-electromotive voltage signals generated by switching operations of the switching elements of the inverter 20 are shown in FIG. 3.

[0023] A counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil of the brushless motor 30 is shown in FIG. 4. In a case where a time required to detect a rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage is T_{f-a} or T_{f-b} , where $T_{f-a} < T_{f-b}$ after a terminal voltage of the corresponding stator coil has been turned off, phase commutation is performed at a point of time earlier than a point of time corresponding to an electrical angle of 30° . The time corresponds to a reduced T_{c-a} or T_{c-b} , respectively, delay time after the counter-electromotive voltage has reached a zero-crossing point. That is, in the case where the time required to detect the counter-electromotive voltage is T_{f-a} , the phase commutation signal is output at a time corresponding to an electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_{c-a}$ after the counter-electromotive voltage has reached the zero-crossing point. In the case where the time required to detect the counter-electromotive voltage is T_{f-b} , the phase commutation signal is output at a time corresponding to an electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_{c-b}$ after the counter-electromotive voltage has reached the zero-crossing point.

[0024] If a time of output of the phase commutation signal is varied by application of the reduced amount of the delay time of phase commutation depending on the time required to detect the counter-electromotive voltage, the time of output of the phase commutation signal is made earlier in proportion to the required time as shown in FIG. 5. That is, since the time of output of the phase commutation signal is made earlier in proportion to the time required to detect the counter-electromotive voltage, the brushless motor 30 is stably operated when in an overloaded state. In this case, T_{f-max} is a maximum time required to detect the zero-crossing point in a current rotation speed range of the brushless motor 30. A maximally reduced amount T_{c-max} of the delay time, proportional to the T_{f-max} , is less than, or equal to, the time corresponding to 30° , a maximum electrical angle.

[0025] FIG. 6 is a flowchart illustrating a method of controlling the brushless motor, according to an aspect of the present invention. Referring to FIG. 6, the controller 60 detects the falling edge of the terminal voltage in an unexcited state in which driving voltage is turned off, in operation 100.

[0026] The controller 60 determines the elapsed time after detecting the falling edge, in operation 110.

[0027] Thereafter, the controller 60 determines whether a rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage induced from an unexcited stator coil is detected in operation 120. Upon determining that the rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage is not detected in operation 120, detection is again attempted.

[0028] However, if it is determined that the rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage is detected, in operation 120, the controller 60 stops the counting of the elapsed time, in operation 130. Thereafter, a phase commutation point of time at which the terminal voltage is applied to a next phase is determined depending on the determined elapsed time T_f from the falling edge of the terminal voltage to the rising edge of the counter-electromotive voltage.

[0029] According to an aspect of the invention, in operation 140, to determine the range of the determined elapsed time T_f , the determined elapsed time T_f is compared with the minimum detection time T_{f-a} and the maximum detection time $T_{sense-max}$ previously set.

[0030] Upon determining, as a result of operation 140, that the determined elapsed time T_f is less than the minimum detection time T_{f-a} , the motor 30 is determined to be in an underloaded state where a load is very small. Thus, a minimally reduced amount of the delay time is applied. This case is similar to the case where phase commutation is performed at a time when a time, corresponding to the electrical angle of 30° , has elapsed after a zero-crossing point has been detected. Accordingly, a point of time when the time corresponding to the electrical angle of 30° has elapsed, after the zero-crossing point has been detected, in operation 150, is determined as the point of time for phase commutation. After the zero-crossing point is detected, in operation 151, upon determining 152 that the time corresponding to the electrical angle of 30° has elapsed, the phase commutation signal is output and, therefore, phase commutation is performed applying a driving voltage to a next phase, in operation 180.

[0031] Upon determining, in operation 140, that the determined elapsed time T_f is equal to or greater than the minimum detection time T_{f-a} and is less than the maximum detection time $T_{sense-max}$, a reduced amount T_c of the delay time, which is previously set to correspond to the determined elapsed time T_f and is proportional to the determined elapsed time T_f is determined, in operation 160. Thereafter, a time, corresponding to the time corresponding to

the electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_c$ elapsed after the zero-crossing point has been detected, is determined as the time for phase commutation point of time, in operation 161. After the zero-crossing point is detected in, operation 162, upon determining that a time corresponding to the electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_c$ has elapsed, in operation 163, the phase commutation signal is output. Thus, phase commutation is performed applying a driving voltage to a corresponding phase, in operation 180. That is, the reduced amount T_c of the delay time is actively changed so as to be proportional to the determined elapsed time T_f . Thus the motor 30 is stably operated in an overloaded state.

[0032] Additionally, since the motor 30 is in the overloaded state where a load is very large upon determining, in operation 140, that the determined elapsed time T_f is equal to or greater than the maximum detection time $T_{sense-max}$, the maximum reduced amount T_{c-max} of the delay time is applied making the phase commutation point of time as soon as possible. Accordingly, a point of time, when a time corresponding to an electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_{c-max}$ has elapsed after the zero-crossing point is detected is determined as the phase commutation point of time, in operation 170.

[0033] After the zero-crossing point is detected, in operation 171, upon determining that a time corresponding to an electrical angle of $30^\circ - T_{c-max}$ has elapsed, in operation 172, a phase commutation signal is output. Phase commutation is performed applying a driving voltage to a corresponding phase, in operation 180.

[0034] According to an aspect of the present invention, whether the counter-electromotive voltage is detected within a preset time is confirmed. The determined elapsed time T_f , determined elapsed in operation 110, is compared to the maximum detection time T_{f-max} at which detection of the counter-electromotive voltage is maximally delayed. Upon determining that the determined elapsed time T_f is greater than the maximum detection time T_{f-max} to detect the counter-electromotive voltage, detecting of the counter-electromotive voltage does not continue and phase commutation is forcibly performed applying the terminal voltage to a next phase after a preset delay time.

[0035] As apparent from the above description, aspects of the present invention provide an apparatus driving a brushless motor and method of controlling the motor, which actively changes an output time of a phase commutation signal depending on variation of a load. Thus,

the motor stably operates in an overloaded state improving operational efficiency of a system including the motor.

[0036] Although a few embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it would be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes may be made in these embodiments without departing from the principles and spirit of the invention, the scope of which is defined in the claims and their equivalents.